

December 5, 2017

Attn: House Education and Workforce Committee
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions
Re: PPI Letter of Support for H.R. 4219, the Workflex in the 21st Century Act

To Members of the Subcommittee:

To balance the demands of work, family, and the curveballs life throws at us, the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) has long supported flexible work arrangements for workers, including paid parental, family, and medical leave, flex-time and telecommuting. Not only do such arrangements help workers balance work and family, they are also good for companies. Today's knowledge economy puts a premium on flexible and collaborative workplaces in which workers and employers work together to innovate, boost productivity, respond to rapid market shifts and keep themselves on the leading edge of global competitiveness.

The policy questions we face are these: What's the best way to balance the needs of employers and workers and maximize their joint ability to innovate and compete? How should lawmakers construct paid leave and workplace flexibility policies that foster a common commitment to company success?

PPI believes H.R. 4219, the Workflex in the 21st Century Act, strikes this balance in very creative ways. The legislation grants both part-time and full-time employees the paid leave and workflex benefits they need, like compressed and predictable work scheduling and telework, while providing employers with the flexibility they need to administer these benefits.

For employers looking to attract a talented workforce, the legislation creates a voluntary program of compensable leave based on employment size and the amount of time an employee has spent with the company. Under this voluntary approach, employers would be obliged not only to provide generous leave but also to offer their employees more flexible work arrangements. In return, companies could avoid rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates that make it difficult to create the nimble, responsive workplaces today's economy demands.

This proposal would not relieve any company of the responsibility to offer paid leave; companies that don't opt-in would continue to be subject to state mandates. What's more, this legislation provides greater guaranteed paid leave than is provided under any current state law and more than nearly all local laws, while also incorporating workflex options and important worker protections.

In contrast to this balanced and collaborative approach, top down mandates alone are unduly rigid and fraught with potential for labor-management conflict. And, as a practical matter, this does not seem like an auspicious time politically for passing a federal paid leave mandate. Even if that were not the case, however, PPI would still favor the collaborative approach proposed by the Workflex in the 21st Century Act. It would yield economic and societal benefits for both employers and workers, creating a "win-win" solution that merits the support of pro-growth progressives.

Sincerely,



Will Marshall
President
Progressive Policy Institute